



Sandbach High School

and Sixth Form College

Our Academy, Our Future

25 January 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

School League Tables 2018—but remember there is more to a school than.....

The DfE league tables for schools have now been published (24 January 2019) and it is pleasing to see that, once more, the hard work of students and staff has been rewarded with us sitting at the 'top' of the Cheshire East table. Whilst being at the 'top' of the table is highly gratifying what generates greater pride on my part in our school is the consistency of our success. Our achievements, academically or otherwise, project a school that is vibrant, forward looking and one that positively responds to changing circumstances whilst maintaining a commitment to our principles. These include ensuring ours is a caring and well-ordered community where everyone is encouraged to develop self-awareness and personal responsibility, playing a full part in the life of the school.

Well-being

Previous newsletters, our school website and the banners at the front of the school have all celebrated the school's receipt of the AcSEED award (celebrating emotional well-being in schools). The award (confirmed late in the Autumn Term) was a timely response recognising as it did the excellent work we do in this challenging and sensitive area.

This award came in the midst of one of the most challenging periods that I have experienced in over 25 years as Headteacher of our school. The end of the summer term 2018 especially and through into the Autumn Term the school and individual members of staff were subjected to a prolonged period of 'vile', 'wicked', 'contemptible' and quite simply erroneous postings on a range of social media sites following the permanent exclusion of a student from our Sixth Form College. This exclusion, that hit local, national and international media outlets, has now been reviewed by an Independent Review Panel. The panel, after careful consideration of the representations from the student himself, the school and a Special Educational Needs expert (appointed by Cheshire East Council), decided unanimously to uphold the school's permanent exclusion decision.

The SEN expert confirms that the school had made 'reasonable adjustments' to address the needs of the student.

Panel members accepted that the messages posted by the student were in breach of school policies. The panel concluded that the school had excluded the student lawfully following repeated breaches of the school's mobile phone and electronic device policy and school contract. Sadly, I doubt very much that the IRP's vindication of the school's initial decision will receive anything like the media coverage the 'ill-informed' allegations received!

To all those parents, carers, students and friends of our school who offered such positive support to us I should like to say a very big thank you, and reassure you if reassurance is required that your faith in our school was justified. However, we will as is our 'mantra' continue to work with parents, carers, students and staff to further strengthen and improve what we do.

Internal Sports Facilities—access arrangements

'Bemused' and 'baffled' students, parents, staff and visitors continue to be exacerbated by the Local Authority's (LA) decision, supported by the Everybody Trust (ET) to install 'mag' locks on the external doors to the Sports Hall, for example, throwing out an agreement reached in Spring 2018.

The lack of consultation (we were informed by letter) leaves the school in a very difficult situation. Discussions with other Headteachers with a similar joint use agreement confirm that they have not been informed that similar 'action' is to be taken at their respective centres. Defending their disproportionate action the LA and the ET argue that the 'mag' locks are required for safeguarding purposes. Fine, if this is the case then they will as a matter of priority and utmost urgency be installing such 'security' measures at all other centres across Cheshire East. They are not and there are no plans to do so. It is for that reason why so many here in school regard the actions taken over the holiday period by the LA and ET as punishing our school and more importantly our students.

At a meeting held at Westfields earlier this week there was no sense of compromise on the part of the LA/ET leaving one person to comment to me: "Why are they so intent on undermining the educational opportunities in one of their most successful schools". When a question of a similar nature was put to the LA/ET representatives, there was no response. If these 'draconian' safeguarding arrangements are right for Sandbach, then they must as a clear priority be implemented elsewhere otherwise this lack of action supports the contention that the LA is intent on 'punishing' our school.

Further meetings are planned and it is to be hoped that an appropriate level of 'common sense' is adopted.

If you would like to discuss anything further with me, please do not hesitate to contact me at jmleigh@sandhigh.cheshire.sch.uk.

Yours sincerely



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